



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

TROOPS JOIN RITCHIE TO CELEBRATE “10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION AND FORT DRUM DAY” AT THE STATE CAPITOL

PATTY RITCHIE March 22, 2016

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State Senator Patty Ritchie welcomed Brigadier General Paul Bontrager, Acting Senior Commander of the 10th Mountain Division and troops to the State Capitol Tuesday for “10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day.”

Now in its 5th year, the annual event aims to raise awareness of Fort Drum among legislators, state government leaders, visitors and staff, as well as highlight the contributions of the post and its troops to our region, state and nation. In addition to General Bontrager, 10th Mountain Division Garrison Commander Col. Bryan Laske and more than 30 troops—including six native New Yorkers—took part in the event.

“Fort Drum Day grew out of the recognition that for many of my colleagues—and for many New Yorkers—Fort Drum is just a little too far to travel and visit, so we bring a little bit of Fort Drum to Albany,” said Senator Ritchie, during the day’s Senate session where troops were recognized.

“I’m proud to represent Fort Drum and the 10th Mountain Division—and proud of the many accomplishments of the young men and women who volunteer to serve as members of our Armed Forces. You don’t have the easiest job in the world, but it may be the most important.”

The highlight of 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day was a formal address by General Bontrager inside the historic Senate Chamber. General Bontrager spoke on behalf Major General Jeffrey Bannister, who is currently deployed, and all other division troops. During his remarks, General Bontrager shared an update on the 10th Mountain Division’s mission, touched on the unique relationship between Fort Drum and the North Country and expressed his appreciation for support of the post and its troops by the Senate.

“Because of how our Fort Drum community relies on off-post communities, we are drawn together and this synergy brought about by our mutual reliance and dependence creates a powerful connection that makes us all stronger,” said General Bontrager.

“Your 10th Mountain Division continues to do more than her share to solve the world’s problems, but we can only sustain our state of perpetual readiness through the unique opportunities afforded at Fort Drum and the strength of the partnerships of the North Country.”

In addition, the day’s Senate session opened with a presentation by Fort Drum’s Color Guard and an invocation by Colonel Gary Fischer. A Resolution was also adopted by the Senate to commemorate the event and pay tribute to the contributions made by 10th Mountain Division troops. Following the Resolution, more than a dozen lawmakers spoke in support of the troops and their sacrifices. Remarks were followed by several minutes of sustained applause for New York’s “heroes.”

The daylong event also featured interactive displays by troops and community organizations that demonstrated the strong partnership between the post and surrounding communities. This year, due to its increased popularity, displays were moved to a larger space in the “Well,” or the central display area of the Legislative Office Building.

Troops from New York State attending 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day included Captain John Goodwill of Black River, Jefferson County; 1st Sergeant Donald Lindley of Guilderland, Albany County; Sergeant Jesse Deel of Geneseo, Livingston County; Private Matthew Fauci of Millbrook, Dutchess County; Specialist Michael Gross of Knox, Albany County; and Specialist Robert Piwowar of Elma, Erie County.

Home to 18,000 troops and their families, Fort Drum is the Northeast’s largest military post. The installation is also a major part of our state and regional economies, responsible for more than \$1.2 billion in economic activity in 2015. In addition, Fort Drum is New York State’s largest single site employer.

Attn. photo editors: Senator Ritchie is pictured in the above photo touring displays with General Paul Bontrager.